

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 31-10-2008		2. REPORT TYPE FINAL		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Future of JIEDDO - The Global C-IED Synchronizer				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Clark, Vincent T. CDR USN Paper Advisor (if Any): CDR Marc Tranchemontagne				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Joint Military Operations Department Naval War College 686 Cushing Road Newport, RI 02841-1207				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT For Example: Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release; Distribution is unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES A paper submitted to the Naval War College faculty in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Joint Military Operations Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.					
14. ABSTRACT The U.S. was not prepared for the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) threat it faced in Afghanistan and Iraq. IED's were the cause of over fifty percent of the U.S. casualties, and emerged as the "weapon of choice" for the enemy. The warfighters were in need of solutions, which the Services were unable to deliver quickly. This precluded the warfighters from being able to exploit the enemies' inherent weaknesses. Therefore, the enemy was able to adapt and change their tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) faster than the U.S. could respond to defeat the IED threat. As a result, the Department of Defense created an ad hoc organization, Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), to circumvent the bureaucratic processes of the Services. Recent reports indicate that JIEDDO and some other counter-IED (CIED) Task Forces are having some success. However, JIEDDO lacks the proper command authority to truly change the outcome on the battlefield. Additionally, evidence suggests that the IED threat has the potential to proliferate beyond Iraq and Afghanistan. This paper examines the IED threat and the genesis of JIEDDO and recommends future command relationships that would better posture the U.S. for the "Long War".					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Improvised Explosive Device, Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 17	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Chairman, JMO Dept
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) 401-841-3556

**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.**

The Future of JIEDDO – The Global C-IED Synchronizer

by

Vincent T. Clark

Commander, U.S. Navy

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: _____

31 October 2008

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Abstract

The Future of JIEDDO – The Global C-IED Synchronizer

The U.S. was not prepared for the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) threat it faced in Afghanistan and Iraq. IED's were the cause of over fifty percent of the U.S. casualties, and emerged as the "weapon of choice" for the enemy. The warfighters were in need of solutions, which the Services were unable to deliver quickly. This precluded the warfighters from being able to exploit the enemies' inherent weaknesses. Therefore, the enemy was able to adapt and change their tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) faster than the U.S. could respond to defeat the IED threat. As a result, the Department of Defense created an ad hoc organization, Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), to circumvent the bureaucratic processes of the Services. Recent reports indicate that JIEDDO and some other counter-IED (CIED) Task Forces are having some success. However, JIEDDO lacks the proper command authority to truly change the outcome on the battlefield. Additionally, evidence suggests that the IED threat has the potential to proliferate beyond Iraq and Afghanistan. This paper examines the IED threat and the genesis of JIEDDO and recommends future command relationships that would better posture the U.S. for the "Long War".

INTRODUCTION

“Defeating the IED (Improvised Explosive Device) threat is absolutely central to winning the Global War on Terror (GWOT), and it is definitely essential for protecting the homeland...”

- Marvin Leibstone

IED Defeat Technologies and Implications

The United States took the war to the enemy in Iraq in March 2003, however was not fully prepared for the enemies’ response. The Coalition Forces were faced (and continue to face) what many describe as an insurgency, and others describe as asymmetric warfare. Regardless of the categorization of the war, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) have emerged as the weapon of choice for the enemy. Prior to Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), not many knew what an IED was; now there are few who do not know about IEDs. The IED threat can be described as an asymmetric threat because IEDs are by their very nature constantly evolving and extremely illusive.¹ Some would argue that IEDs are simply another weapons system, however, IEDs are created (improvised) by the enemy and only limited by the imagination of the enemy. So, if you treat the IEDs as a weapon system and your aim is to defeat that weapon (IED), you will always be one step behind your enemy. A combination of the understanding of counterinsurgency and the understanding of Counter-IED (C-IED) methods is essential when facing an enemy who understands IEDs and asymmetric warfare. We have seen in both OEF and OIF that the relatively weaker enemy has been able to modify their IED tactics faster than the relatively stronger U.S. has been able to react to the emerging threats. Confronted with an insurgency and the problem of IEDs, the U.S. efforts to combat the IED threat have evolved into one

¹ William G. Adamson, *An Asymmetric Threat Invokes Strategic Leader Initiative: The Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization*, (Washington, D.C. Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 2006).

organization responsible for coordinating C-IED efforts. This organization is known today as Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO). Separately, U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) established Task Force Troy (TF TROY) in Iraq, and Task Force Paladin (TF PALADIN) in Afghanistan to execute C-IED efforts in their respective area of responsibility. Recent reports indicate that JIEDDO and the C-IED Task Forces are having some success. However, JIEDDO lacks the proper command authority to truly change the outcome on the battlefield. Additionally, evidence suggests that the IED threat has the potential to proliferate beyond Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. needs to be prepared for the global IED fight - in conjunction with the GWOT. An examination of the IED threat, the Service cultures, and the genesis of JIEDDO reveal that the C-IED organizations evolved in an ad hoc fashion but are no longer adequate to the task; they require a centralized, joint structure to better posture the U.S. for the "Long War".

THE LONG WAR

The attacks of 9/11 took the world by surprise. The United States found itself in a precarious position and was forced to formulate a response and a strategy without the help of an existing campaign plan. Who was the enemy? What state represented (or supported) the terrorists? These were just two of the many questions that needed to be answered in order to respond. The events of 9/11 set the stage for war - a war that on September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush described as, "Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated."² The U.S. responded to the 9/11 terrorist acts by attacking al Qaeda in Afghanistan, with mainly U.S. Special Operations

² George W. Bush, Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Press Secretary), 20 September 2001.

Forces (SOF). And because it was believed that Iraq possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs), the U.S. military took the war to Iraq. Even though major combat operations had concluded, an insurgency grew and it quickly became clear that this would not be a short war.

The term Global War on Terror is still very relevant and widely used, however it is slowly giving way to the term “The Long War”. In his 2006 State of the Union Address to the nation, President Bush remarks, "Our own generation is in a long war against a determined enemy."³

IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES

It quickly became apparent that in both Afghanistan and Iraq, IEDs were the weapon of choice for the insurgents. In OEF and OIF, IEDs are the number one killer of U.S. servicemen. In Afghanistan, 170 out of the 392 total (hostile-related) deaths are attributed to IEDs.⁴ In Iraq, IEDs are responsible for the deaths of 1698 U.S. servicemen, which is approximately fifty percent of all the U.S. casualties.⁵ This percentage rises to fifty-four percent when the number of car bombs (another form of IED) is added to the equation.

Focusing only on the raw data falls short of understanding the IED threat. In addition to the prolific use of IEDs, the enemy’s combination of asymmetric warfare and the use of IEDs have been a lethal combination. General (retired) Meigs best described the problem when he said, “thinking of the threat as only asymmetric misses the mark,

³ George W. Bush, State of the Union Address, (Washington, D.C.), 31 January 2006.

⁴ Defense Manpower Data Center. DoD Personnel and Procurement Statistics. http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/gwot_reason.pdf (accessed 24 October 2008).

⁵ Michael E. O’Hanlon and Jason H. Campbell, *Iraq Index Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq 23 October 2008*, Brookings Institute, <http://www.brookings.edu/iraqindex> (accessed 24 October 2008).

especially if we have the concept wrong. The combination of asymmetry and the terrorists' ability to devise idiosyncratic approaches presents our real challenge.”⁶

Additionally, evidence suggests that the insurgents of Afghanistan and Iraq have been sharing information and knowledge of IED tactics. Today we are seeing an increase in the use of IEDs in Afghanistan as the insurgents there learn from their counterparts in Iraq. The risk of this information proliferating to the global terrorist is cause for concern. In a *USA Today* article entitled, *IEDs Go Beyond Iraq, Afghanistan*, the author states, “Makeshift bomb attacks by insurgents — common in Iraq and Afghanistan — are on the rise in other countries, prompting concerns by military experts that the tactic is becoming the weapon of choice by terror groups worldwide.”⁷ Global proliferation of IEDs through the terrorist networks will require more speed and flexibility from the U.S. C-IED response organizations. This will require the U.S. to realign some of their C-IED organizations under a single joint command that is able to synchronize C-IED efforts on the global scale.

EOD FORCES AND SERVICE CULTURES

IEDs are certainly not a new weapon system, and the U.S. military has personnel dedicated to defeating IEDs. The primary military occupational specialty (MOS) or rating (military job descriptions), in Navy terms, associated with IED defeat is Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD). EOD technicians, regardless of service, receive their core EOD training at the joint Naval School Explosive Ordnance Disposal in Eglin Air Force Base. However, following initial EOD training, each of the service's EOD forces

⁶ Montgomery C. Meigs, *Unorthodox Thoughts about Asymmetric Warfare*. Parameters, (Carlisle, PA. Summer, 2003), 4.

⁷ Tom Vanden Brook, “IEDs go beyond Iraq, Afghanistan,” *U.S.A. Today*, 3 April 2008, http://www.usatoday.com/news/military/2008-04-03-IED_N.htm/ (accessed 26 October 2008).

develop their own unique culture - influenced by their respective doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF).

Because of the high demand for EOD forces, all of the services have deployed EOD forces to both Afghanistan and Iraq. When operating in a joint environment it is important to understand the different service cultures and how these cultures and, more importantly, their organizational structures shape change. This is especially important in an environment that requires the military forces to react to the enemy's ability to modify their tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP). The dominant joint EOD culture must foster ingenuity and flexibility at all levels.

The U.S. Navy's EOD forces are by nature expeditionary. Historically and doctrinally, their focus has been on the maritime missions, however, they have always maintained their ability to adapt quickly to land-centric missions. In addition, Navy EOD's history with underwater mines has shaped their culture. Mines are for the most part conventional and are mass-produced all over the world. However, insurgents are not limited to mass-produced mines, they can create mines which are nothing more than a waterborne IED. Therefore, Navy EOD technicians tend to view underwater mines as simply the maritime version of an IED. Therefore, their culture is less conventional, but more prepared for the "idiosyncratic" threat. Additionally, Navy's EOD forces have a long history of integrating with Special Operations Forces (SOF), both Army and Navy. Because of this, Navy EOD and Special Warfare (SEALs) have learned that there are synergies to having an integrated force structure vis-à-vis a combat/combat service/combat service support structure. This approach has the benefit of combining the combat force with the defeat force, leading to a very integrated and flexible force. Of

note, the Navy is the only service with a dedicated EOD officer career path, which means Navy EOD officers will serve their whole career in EOD.

The U.S. Air Force EOD forces have been shaped by their primary mission of supporting the Air Force bases. Nonetheless, the Air Force EOD forces have been very successful in working with the joint service EOD forces in both Afghanistan and Iraq. However, EOD-qualified Air Force officers are part of the Air Force civil engineering force. These officers request to specialize in EOD, will typically only serve as an EOD officer for one tour, and will continue in the civil engineering field by the time they promote to Major.

The U.S. Army EOD force's primary mission of combat service support has shaped their culture. The Army develops its EOD officers from the Ordnance Officer Corps. These officers will attend the Ordnance Officer Basic Course and serve in that capacity before they have the option of specializing in EOD. However, unlike the Air Force, there is limited opportunity for Army EOD officers to serve in multiple EOD tours throughout their career. The Ordnance Corps is designated combat service support within the Army, and their primary mission is ordnance maintenance.⁸ Because EOD is a combat service support and a secondary mission for the Ordnance Corps, the Army has developed a "wait-and-see" approach to EOD operations. The combat forces have traditionally been the focus of the commanders, and if EOD were needed, they would be called in from the "rear".

The U.S. Marine Corps EOD forces have been shaped by the overall USMC ethos of every Marine is a rifleman first.⁹ This has led to arguably a better integration of the

⁸ U.S. Army, <http://www.goarmy.com/JobDetail.do?id=307/> (accessed 16 October 2008).

⁹ Marion F. Sturkey, *Warrior Culture of the U.S. Marines*, (Heritage Press International, 2003).

EOD technician into combat operations than some of the other services. However, the Marine Corps does not have a career path that allows officers to specialize in EOD. The Marine Corps EOD forces typically serve in Engineer Support Battalions. Like the Army, they serve in a combat service support role.

OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Culture has an impact on how forces are organized, specifically whether they are integrated into or segregated from combat operations. At the tactical level, EOD forces of all the services have had a history of working well together – joint is nothing new for EOD forces. Normally, the opposite holds true – joint is atypical at the tactical level and becomes more of the norm at the operational and strategic level. It is at the operational level that we can learn from the tactical successes of the EOD forces and the strategic successes of JIEDDO – an organization that evolved from the need for expedited C-IED solutions, outside the normal service process. At the operational level, USCENTCOM has established TF TROY in Iraq, and TF PALADIN in Afghanistan. Both are functional task forces charged with executing C-IED efforts in their respective area of responsibility. However, the Army service culture of relegating EOD operations, and now C-IED operations, as combat support/service support may have influenced USCENTCOM's decision to create a functional task force, instead of integrated (EOD and combat arms) task forces. The full benefit of the C-IED efforts will not be realized with JIEDDO, TF TROY and TF PALADIN all as separate organizations, separate from each other but also separate from the combat forces. IEDs on a global scale will only magnify the inefficiencies and seams if the U.S. does not properly align the C-IED organizations.

Another implication of service cultures was evident in how prepared each of the services were when it came time to man, train, and equip their respective EOD/C-IED forces. Except Navy, the other Services do not have an EOD officer career path dedicated to EOD (or C-IED). Adequate senior level representation is particularly important in the DOTMLPF processes and in the programming process, especially when competing for increasingly limited resources. Without adequate senior EOD officer representation, capabilities will tend to maintain status quo or degrade. The Army EOD forces were being stretched to their limits during the early stages of OEF and OIF and needed to enlist the help of all the services' EOD forces. Soon all the services' EOD forces were stretched and feeling the pain of multiple deployments in support of OEF and OIF. Today, all the services are evaluating the adequateness of their EOD forces. However, growing the EOD force will likely be a challenge and will require a firm commitment to the C-IED fight, especially in an already resource constrained environment.

Not having sufficient numbers of EOD forces has impacted the ability of forces to train together and to integrate C-IED into the warfight. As Colonel Adamson writes, "Few maneuver commanders had experience operating with EOD forces to engender the critical cohesion and interoperability essential for success. Due to limited availability of EOD forces in peacetime, maneuver and EOD forces had not trained together and were forced to learn in combat."¹⁰ Insufficient EOD forces was only a piece of the C-IED fight, and not the only capability, or organization, which needed attention.

¹⁰ William G. Adamson, *An Asymmetric Threat Invokes Strategic Leader Initiative: The Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization*, (Washington, D.C.: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 2006).

JOINT IED DEFEAT ORGANIZATION

Facing an asymmetric war with an enemy using IEDs required the U.S. to develop new organizations to counter the IED. In October 2003, the Army created the IED Task Force (IED-TF) to orchestrate the progressively more deadly IED fight. The then G3 of the Army, Lieutenant General Cody, reached out to Brigadier General Votel and a group of former SOF soldiers to stand up the IED-TF.¹¹ However, BG Votel, an infantry officer, did not fully appreciate the complexity of the IED threat. BG Votel's initial assessment of his task led him to believe that he could complete his assignment within six months.¹² The IED-TF and USCENTCOM soon realized the need for a better solution.

Concurrent to the stand-up of the IED-TF, the Army realized the need for an operational advisory assistance team to enhance the combat effectiveness of the operating force and enable the defeat of the IED threats.¹³ The solution was to establish the Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG). Ostensibly, these advisory teams understood counterinsurgency theory and could train the operating force on the latest C-IED lessons learned. However, the IED-TF and the AWG were Army-only solutions and did not capitalize on the strengths of all the Services. In fact, the other Services were developing similar service-only solutions.

In 2004, General Abizaid was beginning to realize that he did not have what he needed to fight the C-IED war. He wrote a memo to the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Richard Myers,

¹¹ Rick Atkinson, "Left of Boom, The Struggle to Defeat Roadside Bombs, Part 1: The IED Problem is Getting Out of Control," *Washington Post*, A13, 30 September 2007.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Elaine Grossman, "Army To Create 'Asymmetric Warfare Group' To Prepare For New Threats", *Inside the Pentagon*, (Washington, D.C. 8 July 2004), http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library_files/article_385_Inside%20The%20Pentago1.doc/ (accessed 23 October 2008).

requesting assistance. *Newsweek* wrote, “According to a military official who declined to be identified discussing sensitive matters, Abizaid warned that IEDs were “the number one killer of American troops” and asked for a “Manhattan Project-like effort,” on the scale of the building of the atom bomb during World War II.”¹⁴

The view of senior civilian leaders was that the military efforts were slow and fragmented, and “the battle against the IEDs exceeded the management capacity of a single service”, so Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, recommended the creation of a Joint IED Task Force.¹⁵ In June 2005, the Secretary of Defense directed the creation of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Task Force (JIEDD TF) to be “the focal point for all efforts in the Department of Defense to defeat Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)”.¹⁶ In publishing this directive, Secretary England made clear his commitment to the C-IED effort and established the requisite authorities to the Director, JIEDD TF. General (retired) Meigs was appointed the first Director, JIEDD TF and reported directly to the Deputy, Secretary of Defense. Naturally, an emergent organization, which was derived from the need to streamline inherently bureaucratic processes, created friction. The C-IED effort required JIEDD TF to deliver timely solutions to the warfighter. To enable a timely solution, a paradigm shift was required for some of the business processes that have traditionally been controlled by the Services, particularly Research, Development, Testing, and Evaluation (RDT&E), acquisition, and budgeting. Because the General Meigs worked directly for Secretary England and had

¹⁴ John Barry, Michael Hastings, and Evan Thomas. “Iraq’s Real WMD. Deadly Puzzle: IEDs are killing U.S. soldiers at a scary clip. At war with an insidious weapon,” *NEWSWEEK*, 27 March 2006, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/46940/page/1/> (accessed 20 October 2008).

¹⁵ Rick Atkinson, “Left of Boom, The Struggle to Defeat Roadside Bombs, Part 1: The IED Problem is Getting Out of Control,” *Washington Post*, A13, 30 September 2007.

¹⁶ Department of Defense Instruction 2000.19, “Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Task Force”, 27 June 2005.

his full support, some of the obstacles were quickly overcome. However, some of the Service friction (toward JIEDDO) still exists.¹⁷

In January 2006, the Joint IED Task Force was redesignated as the Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO). According to the DOD Instruction, JIEDDO's mission is to, "Focus (lead, advocate, coordinate) all Department of Defense actions in support of Combatant Commanders' and their respective Joint Task Forces' efforts to defeat Improvised Explosive Devices as weapons of strategic influence."¹⁸ JIEDDO has been very successful in providing expedited solutions (in the form of equipment) to the warfighter, but is limited in its ability to influence, or more importantly, direct operations on the battlefield. JIEDDO does not have command and control authority under the current DOD instruction. However, JIEDDO should be given the authority to direct operations in the C-IED fight, and this needs to be housed in an organization that excels in asymmetric warfare and can synchronize the efforts not only between Afghanistan and Iraq, but globally.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How can we be more effective in the C-IED fight? Military leaders have to take off their service hats and be less worried about maintaining ones' turf, especially when the nation is fighting the "Long War" with enemies who will use IEDs as their weapon of choice and are able to share information globally. Secretary of Defense, Rumsfeld, said this best, "To win militarily in the new global operational environment, our forces must

¹⁷ Jen Dimascio, "Congress Calls for Answers on IEDs", *Politico.com*, 25 June 2008, <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0608/11321.html/> (accessed 20 October 2008).

¹⁸ Department of Defense Instruction 2000.19E, "Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO)", 14 February 2006.

be trained effectively to decisively overcome asymmetric adversaries and deal with surprise.”¹⁹

JIEDDO has been very successful in developing and delivering C-IED solutions, however they have not been given the proper authority to translate this success directly into operational success. If given the proper authorities and developed under the right command, synergies can be achieved globally in the C-IED fight. An article titled “*Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO): Tactical Successes Mired in Organizational Chaos; Roadblock in the Counter-IED Fight*” recognizes the implications of a global IED fight and recommends that JIEDDO be realigned under a combatant commander (COCOM). The authors argue, “Shifting JIEDDO to a functional combatant commander such as USJFCOM not only addresses the structural issues facing JIEDDO, but also provides a solution to the challenges facing its authority. While JIEDDO possesses budgetary authority for counter-IED programs, it does not have the ability to compel other DoD organizations or Combatant Commanders to act.”²⁰ It is time for JIEDDO to be restructured under a COCOM, however, USJFCOM is not the right fit given their primary mission as the Global Force Provider.²¹ Granted USJFCOM has a role in the C-IED fight, but their role should be limited to developing joint force doctrine, not in planning or synchronizing operations.

U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) is better suited to coordinate a global C-IED effort. USSOCOM understands asymmetric warfare and already has a

¹⁹ Donald H. Rumsfeld, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress 2005*, Department of Defense, 2005. <http://www.dod.mil/execsec/adr2005.pdf/> (accessed 29 October 2008).

²⁰ Richard F. Ellis, Richard D. Rogers, and Bryan M. Cochran, *An Asymmetric Threat Invokes Strategic Leader Initiative: The Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization*, (Norfolk, VA: Joint Forces Staff College, Joint and Combined Warfighting School, 13 March 2007).

²¹ U.S. Joint Forces Command, <http://www.jfcom.mil/about/forceprov.html/> (accessed 20 October 2008).

global synchronizing mission. USSOCOM has demonstrated success in the irregular warfare (IW) arena and has a congruent mission of planning and synchronizing operations against terrorist networks.²² If DOD is going to continue its commitment in the C-IED fight and be prepared to execute the GWOT, or “Long War”, JIEDDO should be given the necessary command authorities to synchronize operations globally. JIEDDO should be operationalized under a functional COCOM, preferably one that already understands asymmetric warfare and synchronizing efforts across COCOM boundaries. In a book about research opportunities for the C-IED, the authors argue that, “counter-IED and counterinsurgency concepts are inexorably linked, and counterinsurgency concept can be used as tools to defeat an IED campaign.”²³ In another article titled, *An Asymmetric Threat Invokes Strategic Leader Initiative: The Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization*, the author outlines the genesis for JIEDDO and argues for future improvements with respect to Interagency integration. Additionally, he makes the inference to USSOCOM as a potential fit for JIEDDO. He states, “DOD’s planned expansion of SOF affords an opportunity for greater collaboration on the IED threat. SOCOM’s current counterterrorist mission as part of the GWOT compels stronger links between the JIEDDO and SOCOM. SOCOM’s worldwide mission fosters global operational continuity and offers adequate military force for preemptive offensive missions against insurgent sanctuaries.”²⁴ Additionally, USSOCOM’s culture is best

²² Jeff McKaughan, “SOF Leader – Interview with Admiral Eric T. Olson, Commander United States Special Operations Command,” *Special Operations Technology*, Vol. 6, Issue 4, 5 June 2008

²³ Committee on Defeating Improvised Explosive Devices: Basic Research to Interrupt the IED Delivery Chain, National Research Council, *Countering the Threat of Improvised Explosive Devices: Basic Research Opportunities, Abbreviated Version*, (The National Academies Press, 2007).

²⁴ William G. Adamson, *An Asymmetric Threat Invokes Strategic Leader Initiative: The Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization*, (Washington, D.C. Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 2006).

suited to the C-IED fight. As mentioned earlier, the organization that drives the C-IED fight must foster ingenuity and flexibility.

CONCLUSIONS

In recognition that both irregular warfare (IW) combined with the use of explosives will be a significant future threat, there are lessons to be learned from the successes of JIEDDO, which can be taken to the next level by reorganizing JIEDDO under a COCOM. The question of which type and the number of forces to be aligned under JIEDDO is another topic left for further examination. However, consolidating all the (sometimes ad hoc) C-IED organizations into a streamlined, flexible organization, combined with the IW expertise, will posture the U.S. to fight the future global “small wars” that we will inevitable face. Again, General Meigs said this best, “Military Organizations must be able to work across a much broader field of activities than those of the conventional military setting.”²⁵ An examination of how Joint IED Defeat Organization formed in the face of the IED threat provides a good framework for how to approach future forms of IW, especially when coupled with idiosyncratic challenges.

²⁵ Montgomery C. Meigs, *Unorthodox Thoughts about Asymmetric Warfare*. Parameters, (Carlisle, PA. Summer, 2003), 10.

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